

Miscellaneous.

THE VILLA TORLONIA.—It is often said that the Italian prices are poor, but it may be said with great truth that they live in the finest palaces in the world. Those erected by cardinals in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are grand and sumptuous in the extreme. Labour was cheap, materials were at hand, and the wealth of the great was abundant. But it seems wonderful that such a costly work as the Villa Torlonia should be commenced and finished at the present day, when wealth is so generally diffused; yet in this instance it is easily explained. The dukes and princes of this family have enriched themselves by speculations in trade and monetary concerns. Their intimacy with the English has helped them to some of the secrets by which wealth may be quickly obtained. They are bankers of the Roman states; and it is said they have the monopoly in tobacco and some other luxuries, which secures to them great revenues. The Villa Torlonia is situated on the Via Pia, about two miles east of Rome—a favourite walk of the cardinals. It is built on the plan of the ancient villas, as a retreat from the burning atmosphere of a scorching city. The rooms are low and small, with floors finely wrought in mosaics and polished marble, which run through twenty apartments. The walls are covered with beautiful frescoes, though not of Raffaele or the Caracci, yet executed by the first artists of the present age. The costly furniture and gilded decorations surpass anything we can conceive, either ancient or modern. The portico is supported by fluted pillars, forming a lofty terrace, upon which a large company may walk and enjoy the evening air, and view the landscape presented by the Campagna, the Sabine hills, and the distant Apennines. The theatre, built of white marble, is a model of surpassing beauty. It would repay an architect to make a journey purposely to see it, if he saw nothing else. The apartments surrounding this gem of architecture are stored with every luxury that kings and princes could desire. The spacious grounds afford numerous out-door amusements. There is an amphitheatre for gymnastics; and if chivalry should ever return, the lists are ready prepared for tilts and tournaments, provided with seats for thousands of spectators. Such is the country residence of the Prince Torlonia. But the principal family mansion is the Palazzo Torlonia in Rome, occupied by his brother, the Due di Bracciano. This also is full of all the magnificence that wealth can command. The banking establishment, so important to Englishmen, is on the front of the mansion, in the Piazza Torlonia, as you enter the grand quadrangle.—*Sights in Italy.*

THE GREATEST OF ALL IRONMASTERS.—There seems to be some reason in the complaint of one of the 'great masters,' Mr. Crawshaw, as proprietor of works at Forest of Dean, Cyfarthfa, Hirwain, and Newbridge, and merchant in Upper Thames-street, that, in the midst of the "sad state of depression" under which the trade at present labours,—with a "competition such that bar-iron and rails may be had for 5*l.* per ton—a price below the present actual cost of production," and without the power to manufacture bank notes,—he and his competitive fellows find themselves so utterly unable to compete with the Bank of England, which not only has that power, but also practises as the greatest of all ironmasters, under-selling even the greatest of all the now comparatively small masters by help of this paper note monopoly. Mr. Crawshaw thinks that the privilege of manufacturing bank notes should be allowed the 'trade' in general, if the "charter to the Bank of England for note-making is to be construed to extend to making iron." He would then, he thinks, be able to compete even with it, while still paying "25,000*l.* weekly, and at the end of each month, in wages."

AT HOLY RHODON CHURCH, SOUTHAMPTON, now in course of demolition, one of the arches lately fell while the stones were about to be separately removed, for use in the reconstruction, killing a workman who had overlifted it while putting in shores without being warned of the probable consequence.

IRISH INSTRUCTION IN CIVIL ENGINEERING.—We have been favoured with a copy of a "Notice to the inhabitants of Dalkey and its vicinity," issued by a "Civil Engineer and Land Surveyor (late of her Majesty's Engineering Department)," who has opened a school at Skibbereen. As an example of the sort of schoolmaster that is abroad, we give the learned gentleman the advantage of our circulation, without the usual charge for advertising. He says the school is,—“For the instruction of reading, writing, history, dictionary, arithmetic, geography, gauging, mensuration and dialling geometry, gunnery and fortification, navigation, with plane rectangular middle latitude and great circle sailing. Trigonometrical surveying and leveling together with several other branches on the mathematics to numerous to mention with their application to the construction of common roads, rail roads, canals harbours docks and tunnels, viaducts aqueducts improvement of lakes rivers bays &c. by drainage embankment and cultivation. Gentlemen—desirous of being instructed in an elementary course of surveying and leveling will find this a most desirable opportunity (not like as in other schools where science is neglected and practice not understood,) it shall be prosecuted with zeal and attention and on moderate terms which may be known on application to the proprietor. The school is supplied with maps of the globe jointly and severally—together with field and office instruments for surveying leveling and mapping. Testimonials of the highest references, &c.” Alack! alack!

LIBERAL ENCOURAGEMENT TO ARCHITECTS.—Mr. Editor: Pray, look at the third plate in "Pugin's Contrasts," and say whether the sarcasm levelled at cheap competitions in '36 is not become, almost *verbatim et literatim*, a positive truism in this present '48? It stands thus:—"New Church: open competition.—For the best design, FIVE POUNDS. The four next best in proportion."—Pugin's Contrasts, 1836. Then see advertisement in BUILDER, Oct. 7, 1848:—"Church of St. Thomas, Heptonstall, Halifax, &c., to accommodate one thousand one hundred persons. Premiums of 10*l.*, 7*l.*, and 5*l.* will be awarded." Call you this a contrast favourable to the prospects of the "youthful, unemployed, and aspiring architects" of 1848.

ROYAL ACADEMY.—On Saturday, at the distribution of premiums, silver medals were awarded for drawings of the Whitehall front of the Banqueting House, to Mr. John Bidlake and Mr. Charles Augustus Gould.

THE LIVERPOOL ARCHITECTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY.—On Wednesday evening in last week, a numerous meeting of the members of the recently-formed but prosperous Liverpool Architectural and Archaeological Society was held at the Royal Institution, in Colquitt-street, in that town, the Rev. David James, F.S.A., of Kirkdale, in the chair. A letter was read from the respected antiquary, John Britton, expressive of his good wishes, and presenting to the society several works, including a copy of his recent publication, "The authorship of the Letters of Junius Elucidated." A cordial vote of thanks was passed to Mr. Britton, and it was unanimously resolved that to mark their sense of the value of Mr. Britton's long devotion to architectural antiquarian pursuits, the treasurer be instructed to send a contribution in the name of the society to the Britton testimonial. After the transaction of miscellaneous business, Mr. J. A. Picton read an interesting historical compilation, entitled "Ancient Liverpool in its Buildings and Architecture." We are forced by pressure of matter to postpone our own notes of a recent visit to Liverpool till next week, when we hope to illustrate them with a fine view of one of the principal buildings now being erected there, and to avail ourselves of some part of Mr. Picton's paper.

We have long had this interesting work before us with the intention of recommending it to our readers, satisfied that, although the subject might seem somewhat out of our province, the fact of its being the work of Mr. Britton, to whom we all owe so much, would bring it there. Mr. Britton has thrown much curious light upon this restless and mysterious subject, and has produced a book, in which many will find deep interest, and all great gratification. It is published by J. R. Smith, of Old Compton-street. It has led to some very able papers on the subject in the *Athenaeum*, *Illustrated Magazine*, and elsewhere. Our readers will bear with pleasure that Mr. Britton's health is restored, and that he is now proceeding vigorously with his autobiography for the subscribers to the "testimonial."

PLAN FOR INCREASING THE HEAT FROM A COMMON FIRE, AND IMPROVING VENTILATION.—The greatest portion of heat, or heated air, from a common fire, passes upwards through the flue, leaving only a small portion to be thrown off by radiation from the front. This small portion is still further diminished by the draught which is necessary to support combustion, forcing it continually back into the fire; so that, in proportion to the heat really obtained, the waste is enormous, and the constant draught of fresh air which the fire requires makes the opposite side of a large room, in many cases, colder than if there was no fire. Why should we submit to this continual waste and inefficiency, while the same fire that requires the draught of fresh air could warm it before it enters at the opposite side of the room. By making it do this, we should get more than treble the amount of heat, have it evolved at that part of the room most distant from the fire, and by this means establish very nearly an equilibrium of temperature. The warm air thus introduced would be available both for the purpose of combustion and respiration, being a continued stream not only of warm but of fresh air, without requiring the least assistance from door or window. The plan I propose is a reciprocating, or self-acting arrangement, by which a spiral current of air is formed, commencing externally by means of a small grating, or brick, let into the front wall, and carried through a pipe (for which a chase may be cut behind the skirting), to the side of the stove passing near the fire. The air within becoming immediately heated, is forced by the greater gravity of the cold air from without, through the continuation of the pipe at the opposite side of the fire, and from thence, by a sheet-iron tube under the floor, behind the skirting, or otherwise, to the opposite extremity of the apartment. If there emerges in a heated state, warms the whole room in its passage across to the fire again, and having supplied entirely the place of the cold air usually let in through doors and apertures, it passes through the flue, and gives place to the fresh and continued (warm) supply which it draws after it, mingles again with the external atmosphere, and completes the spiral and reciprocating current.

STONE QUARRIES.—Sir: To all those who may be in search for stone quarries, I should recommend a visit to the *Black Isle* in Rosshire, N.B., between Cromartie and Fariintosh, which abounds in quarries of freestone of red and brown, and is so near the seashore that a boat may almost go alongside the quarries, which have only been worked for the locality. A quarry extends from the parish of Fariintosh to the parish of Avoch, about four miles: at Mollochey there are two large hills of granite close to the seashore. At the head of the river Avoch is a fine quarry of free stone, fit for foot pavement: and to all contractors who may want foot-pavement stone such as comes from Caithness, I should recommend them to visit the Orkney Islands, where it abounds in nearly all the islands, and might be made a trade of between them and France.

F. URQUHART.

THE STATE OF ALLINGTON CASTLE.—Sir: The observation of your romantic correspondence "Allingham (qu. Allington) Castle," would lead unsuspecting persons to the conclusion that some new desecration was in progress. Had the writer been, as his remarks would imply, much in the habit of dreaming under the oaks of Sandling, he would have been aware of the inaccuracy of which he is, doubtless ignorantly, guilty. But supposing him to be a stranger to the history of these venerable ruins, he must allow me, as a person many years acquainted with the locality, to give a true version of the story. The additions that had been made to the original walls, for the purpose of rendering the place habitable, were not of recent date—perhaps not less than a century's standing; nevertheless, the area and precincts of the castle were much encumbered with the necessary appendages of two farm houses, and its really beautiful remains hidden from view. Part of these obstructions, so far as connected with the smaller farm, have been removed.

We insert the above, not as presenting any novelty, but because, often as the idea has been dwelt upon, it is comparatively seldom carried into effect.—Ed.